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Strategic Domain: Reconquest Romanesque Along the Duero in Soria, Spain¹

By Mickey Abel

What can be seen in a map? This is a loaded question for it is dependent on the type of map to which one is referring and the type of information for which one is searching. Generally, a modern map should replicate what is observable in nature.² With the right notational symbols, shapes, or outlines a variety of natural information should be discernable—mountains, rivers, cities, etc. However, as the perspective becomes more myopic, as for example when one zooms in on a satellite image, significant details may be gained, but important spatial relationships are lost, making that natural, observable information less relevant because the broader context has become blurred.

Metaphorically, this is the problem encountered when analyzing the building patterns of a group of eleventh-and twelfth-century churches found in the Upper Duero region of the province of Soria, Spain. Rather than providing clarity and understanding, the close inspection of their formal details actually poses more questions than it provides answers. Methodologically or theoretically, it appears that these questions can only be addressed through the distance of geographical context. Through this contextual distance,

¹ This material was first presented at the annual conference of the Historians of Medieval Iberia, Exeter University, September, 2005. I would like to thank the editors and anonymous readers for their comments and suggestions.

² E. Edson, *Mapping Time and Space: How Medieval Mapmakers Viewed their World*, (London, 1997), vii. Alternative views to mapping are discussed in Geoff King, *Mapping Reality: An Exploration of Cultural Cartographies*, (New York, 1996).

one come to see a pattern in the topographical siting and portal orientation of the eleventh- and twelfth-century churches, such as that witnessed at Peridices, **(Figure 1)** where the church is located on the highest point in the area with its lateral portal facing out to the open plain. I want to suggest that initially this topographical orientation would have been seen as a subtle Visigothic mark on the Roman landscape, that in its early stages would have signaled a site of Christian security. However, by the time of the twelfth century, or the period of time surrounding the proliferation of church building in the Sorian district, this pattern of building had evolved into an exemplary sign of Christian dominance over the surrounding domain. This conclusion is reached by way of a mapping project that highlights the orientational relationship between a set of small chapels built in close proximity to the defensive fortresses that defined the boundaries of the Reconquest along the upper Duero in the region of Soria. Archaeologists and art historians alike have ignored these small chapels and their relationship to the fortresses that dominated the frontier landscape. In terms of our understanding of the later twelfth-century churches' distinct configuration, I will argue that this chapel/fortress relationship is particularly telling.



Figure 1: *Perdices, East of Almazan, looking towards the Northwest.*
Photo, Hillary Turby and Mickey Abel.

When examined with close focus, a prominent feature that links many of the rural churches of twelfth-century Iberia into a distinct corpus is their portal composition.

(Figure 2) Found throughout the kingdoms of Castile and León, but for the purposes of this study particularly in the Sorian region, the churches of this stylistic group feature a deeply recessed, porch-like space created through the combination of incrementally stepped archivolts surrounding a tympanum-free portal opening.³ Isolated in this manner, the portal configuration generally resembles a set of eleventh- and twelfth-century churches found in the Charente-Poitou region of Western France.⁴ **(Figure 3)** The

³ I say “porch-like” because this not technically a separate distinguishable spatial unit, but by way of the configuration of architectural elements, appears to be a space to be entered. See S. Haven Caldwell, “The Introduction and Diffusion of the Romanesque Projecting Single-Portal Unit in Northern Spain,” Ph.D. Dissertation (Cornell University, 1974). Caldwell suggests that although the archivolts do not technically form an architectural porch, they provide a transition from exterior to interior, and thus give the feel or experience of a porch.

⁴ These Iberian churches have been incorporated into a broader study, which seeks to illuminate the function and meaning of the archivolted, tympanum-free portal configuration, particularly as it developed in the Charente-Poitou region of Western France. See M. Abel-Turby, *Rhetorical Translation, Exegetical Interpretation: The Archivolt as a Statement of Philosophy*, Unpublished Dissertation (University of Texas at Austin, 2001), Appendix A, 363-365. In general, see M. Durliat, *El arte románico en España*, (Barcelona, 1972); M. Gómez-Moreno, *El arte románico español*, (Madrid, 1934); J. Gaya Nuño, *El románico en la provincia de Soria*, (Madrid, 1946); and W. Whitehill, *Spanish Romanesque Architecture of the Eleventh Century*, (Oxford, 1968).

compositional distinction that serves to distinguish the Sorian churches as typically Iberian is however, the addition of an Islamic or Mozarabic inspired *alfiz*.⁵ **(Figure 4)** This linearly-articulated rectangle surrounding the set of concentric archivolts provides both visual definition to the architectural composition and three-dimensional expansion to the unit by pulling the portal configuration out from façade wall to form the porch-like entrance.⁶ **(Figure 5 and Figure 6)**

⁵ J. Dodds, *Architecture and Ideology in Early Medieval Spain*, (University Park, 1989), 33, 86, 88, 96. Dodds shows examples of the *alfiz* for both Islamic and Mozarabic contexts. See also M. Gómez-Moreno, *Iglesias mozárabes: Arte español de los siglos IX a XI*, (Granada, 1998). French façade programs are more typically flat with the archivolts of the portal forming a concave opening. See Abel-Turby, Appendix B, 436-437.

⁶ For a broader discussion of Iberian porches, see I. Gonzalo Bango Torviso, “Atrio y pórtico en el románico español: concepto y finalidad cívico-litúrgica,” *Boletín del Seminario de Arte y Arqueología*, 40-41 (Universidad de Valladolid, 1975), 175-88; and I. Gonzalo Bango Torviso, “El espacio para enterramientos privilegiados en la arquitectura medieval española,” *Anuario del Departamento de Historia y Teoría del Arte*, 4 (Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, 1992), 93-132. Bango Torviso suggests that the zone in front of and next to the lateral portal was extremely privileged and could be used for a variety of functions to include liturgical celebrations, penitential acts, reunions of the laity, and especially the internment of socially privileged personages.



Figure 2: *Perdices, Detail South Lateral Portal.*
Photo, Hillary Turby and Mickey Abel.



Figure 3: Maillé (c.1100), Poitou, France, Western Façade.
Photo, Hillary Turby and Mickey Abel.



Figure 4: *Santa Maria del Castillo, Calatañazor, West of Soria, Western Portal.*
Photo, Hillary Turby and Mickey Abel.



Figure 5: *Coroña del Conde, West of Soria, South Lateral Portal.*
Photo, Hillary Turby and Mickey Abel.



Figure 6: *Valdegeña, East of Soria, South Lateral Portal.*
Photo, Hillary Turby and Mickey Abel.

Stepping back from this myopic focus on portal's formal elements, one notes another conspicuous commonality linking many of the rural churches of Castile and León. Not only are these churches similarly defined by their archivolted portal configurations, which are generally positioned on either the north or the south sides of the church,⁷ but they are uniformly sited on the top of isolated hills or rocky outcroppings, clearly acknowledging the visual advantages of this area's natural topographical features.⁸ As seen at Viana de Duero, (**Figure 7**) this combination of portal orientation

⁷ Bango Torviso, "Atrio y pórtico," 186, says that the village people would have entered the church by way of either the north or south lateral portal, depending on which side of the church would have been closest to the road leading to the church.

⁸ A Western orientation and elaborately sculpted portal configuration common to the Poitou region of western France can also be found in Iberian churches, but they are more commonly associated with urban

and topographical siting conveys a dominating presence not felt in the French context. Empirically speaking, the Iberian churches appear to be more actively engaged in the vocabulary of their landscape setting than the detail-laden facades of Poitou. In Iberia, particularly in the open rural areas of Castile and León, this visual presence calls to mind the strategic--and one might say purposeful--placement of modern billboards.⁹ **(Figure 8)** Prominently placed so as to be recognized from a long distance, buildings with these portal configurations were singularly associated with a church building. Functioning as a “branding” device—or monogram—the portal could be read as the “sign” that signifies the general civility of Christianity.¹⁰ As the dominant visual identifier of the building, I have suggested elsewhere that the portal configuration operated in a manner similar to the way the Golden Arches at a freeway exit signal a safe place for a food break on an unfamiliar stretch of highway.¹¹

settings and date to the later twelfth century. A good example is that of Santo Domingo in the town of Soria, which dates to the end of the twelfth century. This church is said to represent a “Hispano-Franco” style resembling that of Notre-Dame-la-Grande in Poitier. See L Lojendio and A. Rodríguez, *Rutas románicas en Castilla y León/1* (Madrid, 1995), 15-24. The churches considered in this study are rural and although they may be found throughout Castile and Leon, this study isolates those of Soria because of the historical documents’ emphasis on the Duero as a defining element of both geography and historical events.

⁹ The idea of a church façade working as a billboard comes from C. Altman, “The Medieval Marquee: Church Portal Sculpture as Publicity,” *Popular Culture in the Middle Ages* (Bowling Green, 1986), 6-16.

¹⁰ The portal configuration of both France and Spain can be likened to monographic icons in the modern advertising sense that the specific arrangement of sculptural features was specifically placed on the building to signal a particular association—in this case, a church and not a house, palace, or market. The idea of a “monographic icon” is taken from R. Walker, “The Wall Paintings of the Panteón de los Reyes at León: A Cycle of Intercession” *Art Bulletin* 82/2 (2000), 200-225.

¹¹ M. Abel, “Before Nationalities: Peace Initiatives and Corporate Identity via the Medieval Parish Church Portal” *Connections: European Studies Annual Review*, Center for the Study of Europe, Brigham Young University, Vol. 1 (2005): 6-11, (<http://europe.byu.edu/rmesc.html>).



Figure 7: *Viana de Duero, North of Almazan, Northern Wall.*
Photo, Hillary Turby and Mickey Abel.



Figure 8: *Sorian Plain, from Almazan, looking to the Northeast.*
Photo, Hillary Turby and Mickey Abel.

But what of the landscape and the highway? If the portal configuration and topographical orientation was so familiar in a particular region as to be ubiquitous--as is suggested by highlighting the number of sites with these features in the upper Duero region of Castile, known as Soria (**Figure 9**)--to whom were these buildings broadcasting and what was the message presented by their distinctive formal elements? Was there something within the context of this region that called for the repetition of this particularly dramatic employment of portal orientation and topographical siting? How would these buildings and their landscape setting have been originally seen and “read?” To answer these questions, one must realize that, at the most basic level, the rural topography of the Sorian landscape looks today essentially as it would have appeared in the Middle Ages. If we can see beyond the multiplication of later constructions and trust our modern assessment of the visual correlation between landscape and church, such as that seen across the Sorian plain on the road out of Almazan, (**Figure 10**) the questions become: what did the replication of this pattern of correlated topography and orientation represent to the people who used these churches regularly? And further, would this more regularly seen and locally familiar visual interaction have been significantly different from that experienced by someone who was simply passing by these churches on their way to somewhere else?



Figure 9: *Map, Sites with Twelfth-Century Churches.*
Map, George Neal, Amy Hamman, and Mickey Abel.



Figure 10: *Sorian Plain, from Almazan.*
Photo, Hillary Turby and Mickey Abel.

Unfortunately, as is the case with many investigations into the Middle Ages, the surviving written records do not reveal the data necessary to answer the type of questions suggested by the architecture. One needs to expand beyond these documents in search of an answer. In this case, the use of an archaeologically inspired spatial analysis to create a contextual map of the Sorian province will help explain the relationship of these churches to one another and to their geographical/ historical environment.¹²

THE HISTORY OF THE REGION AS IT PERTAINS TO ITS GEOGRAPHY

The preeminent cultural factor shaping our contextual understanding of this period was the Reconquest.¹³ The Duero River, both historically and geographically, has been highlighted in the scholarship as a significant line of demarcation between Christianity to the north and Islam to the south.¹⁴ A close reading of the historical events and the sites

¹² Spatial analysis is often the basis of domain studies. For example, see S. Bonde and C. Maines, "Sovereignty and Territory: The Construction of Monastic Domains in the Medieval Diocese of Soissons as a Case Study," *Proceedings of the 3rd International Conference of Medieval and Later Archaeology: Medieval Europe* (Basle, 2002), 453-463. In this endeavor I find myself, as J. B. Harley would describe it, in the nebulous area between the historian who "is primarily concerned with the extent to which the evidence of maps can be evaluated as a 'true' record of the facts of events in space," and a mapmaker who plays a "rhetorical role in defining the configurations of power in society as well as recording their manifestations in the visible landscape." See J. B. Harley, "Maps, Knowledge and Power," in *The Iconography of Landscape*, D. Cosgrove and S. Daniels (eds.), (Cambridge, 1988), 277-312. For maps and the problems associated with mapping in the Middle Ages, see P. D. A. Harvey, *Medieval Maps* (London, 1991); and D. Cosgrove and S. Daniels (eds.), "Introduction," *The Iconography of Landscape* (Cambridge, 1988), 1-10. I am proposing to re-contextualize these churches by situating them in the environment in which they were conceived and used. In doing so I am acknowledging, as Edson, vii, says, "the hand of the map maker is guided by a mind located in a certain time and place and sharing inevitably the prejudices of his or her surroundings." After beginning with a brief explanation of the theoretical methodologies to be used, the data gathered will be organized and presented cartographically.

¹³ D. Lomax, *The Reconquest of Spain* (New York, 1978); R. Collins, *Early Medieval Spain: Unity in Diversity 400-1000* (New York, 1983); C. Bishko, "The Spanish and Portuguese Reconquest," *A History of the Crusades*, K. Setton (ed.), (Madison, 1975), Vol. 3: 396-456; and J. Powers, *A Society Organized for War: The Iberian Municipal Militias in the Central Middle Ages 1000-1284* (Berkeley, 1988).

¹⁴ Harley, 302, says, "Cartography remains a teleological discourse, reifying power, reinforcing the *status quo*, and freezing social interaction within charted lines." In terms of the historian's rendering of the divisive line along the Duero, it is applied more apply to the lower Duero. In the Sorian region the hilly topography prevents the river from defining a clear line on the landscape.

on which they were played out, shows that while the Duero does indeed signify a metaphorical line in the sand, the geographical and historical realities are much less clearly defined. A detailed history of the Reconquest illustrates that sites on either side of the Duero changed hands frequently--so much so that the back-and-forth nature of conquering and holding a fortress site was a greater reality than the more familiar historical overview that presents the conquest as a steady march southward.¹⁵

Geographically, the Duero River has its headwaters in the mountains above and slightly to the west of the town of Soria. **(Figure 11)** It runs south about 36 kilometers in the general direction of Almazan, where it turns to the West and meanders through Spain to Portugal all the way to the Atlantic coast. It represents, therefore, a long and continuous natural boundary—one where the historical events that took place in the lower sections of the river, to the west of Zamora, had significantly different connotations than those that took place in the upper or Sorian region.

¹⁵ Lomax, Chapter 2, "The Struggle for the Duero," 35-49.



Figure 11: *Map, Soria, the Duero River.*
Map, George Neal, Amy Hamman, and Mickey Abel.

Historically, the modern telling of these events tends to give us a picture of this landscape as “neutral”—a kind of “existential tableau”¹⁶ that had the particulars of history and culture written on it. Yet, the upper Duero can be separately identified as a “place” or “an arena of common engagement,”¹⁷ distinct in time and space from other Reconquest sites. Phenomenologically, the underlying assumption is that contemporary perceptions of the region would have reflected the same compartmentalizing or apportioning of space according to historical events that we sense in the written records—that the people who inhabited this region at the time the historical records were written would have had a similar mental picture of the area’s natural boundaries and geologic features as did those

¹⁶ E. Casey, “How to Get from Space to Place in a Fairly Short Stretch of Time: Phenomenological Prolegomena” *Senses of Place*, S. Feld and K. Basso (eds.), (Santa Fe, 1996), 14.

¹⁷ C. Geertz, “Afterword,” *Senses of Place*, S. Feld and K. Basso, (eds.), (Santa Fe, 1996), 260-262.

who were doing the official recording.¹⁸ Moreover, we assume that there would have been a correspondingly shared knowledge or sense of the events taking place within these places.¹⁹ We, therefore, have to ask whether the people living on the north or south side of the Duero saw and understood themselves to be essentially the same? Or was their understanding of their own identity based on location? Did their sense of identity change with the events of the Reconquest? Or was the daily existence of these people unaffected by the political events surrounding their lived experience?

If we want to understand the medieval rendering of the divisive line we have drawn along the Duero, we have to attempt to reconstruct not only those landscape elements that might have instructed the inhabitant's perception, but also the rituals or allegories that guided these people's conduct within those spaces. We can do this using an archaeologically and anthropologically constructed "cognitive map."²⁰ This is the kind of map one draws for a friend describing the way to a place using the visual landscape as it is recorded in one's mind or memory without reference to standard cartographic devices like scale, specific road names or cardinal directions. However, because we know that human perceptions are not strictly sensual, but are socially and culturally constructed, our cognitive map should reflect this and should include internal, as well as external horizons. In addition to an accounting of such exterior perceptions as

¹⁸ These theoretical ideas are explored in D. Smail, *Imaginary Cartographies: Possession and Identity in Late Medieval Marseille* (Ithaca, 1999), 1-41.

¹⁹ Casey, 13-52, reminds us that at any one moment the mental picture of these boundaries and features would have been static or even stable, but like our own perceptions were constantly shifting.

²⁰ C. Renfrew and P. Bahn, "What Did They Think?: Cognitive Archaeology, Art, and Religion" *Archaeology Theories, Methods, and Practice* (New York, 2004), 393-397, 406-408; Kevin Walsh, "A Sense of Place: A Rule for Cognitive Mapping in the 'Postmodern' World?" *Interpreting Archaeology: Finding Meaning in the Past*, Hodder, *et al* (eds.), (London, 1995), 131-140; and S. Feld and K. Basso, "Introduction," *Senses of Place* (Santa Fe, 1996), 11. See also J. B. Harley, "Maps, Knowledge, and Power" *The Iconography of Landscape*, D. Cosgrove and S. Daniels (eds.), (Cambridge, 1988), 277-312.

the direction of the rising sun we have to register the internal, i.e. allegorical or ritual connotations, such as the sun's association with the Biblical Resurrection.²¹ We know by way of medieval travelogues such as the *Pilgrim's Guide to Santiago*, that this type of "sensual emplacement"²² was common practice in relating geographical space.²³ Distances were conveyed not in measurable units, but by how far one could ride or walk in a day. Sites were described by their prominent features or the rituals associated with them. As such these are "embodied renderings"²⁴--initiated from within the body inhabiting space, and are therefore quite different from the information one would find on a modern map. For the sake of orientation, however, the modern map will provide a foundational view of the region.

Topographically, the Sorian portion of the Duero hugs the base of the mountainous wooded area known as the *Pinares de Almazan*. **(Figure 12)** Highlighted as green on the map, this wooded area forms the northern border of a high sierra of open rolling hills. This plain, pictured in **Figure 13** from the North looking South is bound to the south by other mountain ranges, also defined by a river—the Jalon, which runs east to the Mediterranean. As defined by the white area on the map, **(Figure 12)** the high sierra between the two rivers formed a more permeable "zone of demarcation" than the definitively drawn line along the Duero River.²⁵ The separation effect of this high sierra

²¹ Casey, 16-19.

²² Feld and Basso, 9.

²³ P. Gerson, J. Krochalis, A. Shaver-Crandell and A. Stones, *The Pilgrim's Guide to Santiago de Compostela: A Critical Edition*, Volume II: The Text (London, 1998).

²⁴ Feld and Basso, 11.

²⁵ L. Caballero Zoreda, "Arqueología tardorromana y visigoda en la provincia de Soria," *Actas del Ier Symposium de Arquelogia Soriana*, 9 (1984), 452-455.

zone becomes even clearer when we begin to situate historically significant sites on the map. Defensively, the wooded areas on either side of this zone had long been valued for their protective and strategic positions. The two major Roman roads, indicated in red on the map, **(Figure 14)** which connected the hilltop fortified sites at Numancia, Uxama, and Clunia to the north and Medinaceli, Secontia, and Termantia to the south, indicate that as early as the second century this region was an important center of an east/west trade and travel pattern.²⁶ It is, however, by way of the built infrastructure that Roman Soria begins to define itself as a distinct, internally connected region. The local-interconnecting secondary roads indicated in deep blue on the map, **(Figure 15)** which run north and south, provided regional communication between the urban sites along the two major roads. The extensive aqueducts and irrigation systems of the areas north of Medinaceli and Termancia **(see Figure 15)** indicate a regionally-connected organization based on a shared understanding of water technology.²⁷ And the impressive triumphal arch at Medinaceli, **(Figure 16)** which was built in the second century on one of the highest, most visible points in the regional topography, marked the crosspoint where the major east/west route met that of the north/south.

²⁶ P. Díaz, "City and Territory in Hispania in Late Antiquity" *Towns and Their Territories Between Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, G. Brogiolo, N. Gauthier, and N. Christie (eds.), (Lieden, 2000), 3-35; P. Artigas y Corominas, "San Estaban de Gormaz: La Epigraphia Romana" *Boletín de la Sociedad Española de Excursiones*, 39 (1931), 19-29. For the study and analysis of ancient roads and their importance to trade and travel, see B. P. Hindle, *Medieval Roads* (London, 1982); O. R. Constable, *Trade and Traders in Muslim Spain: The Commercial Realignment of the Iberian Peninsula, 900-1500* (Cambridge, 1994); and T. Glick, Chapter 3, "Urbanization and Commerce" *Islamic and Christian Spain in the Early Middle Ages* (Princeton, 1979), 110-134.

²⁷ Various Authors, "Excavaciones arqueológicas en el yacimiento de Tiermes: Informes preliminares de la Octava Campaña (1982)," *Celtiberia*, Vol. XXXII/64 (1982): 329-358; and T. Glick, Chapter 4, "Irrigation in Al-Andalus: A Reassessment" *From Muslim Fortress to Christian Castle: Social and Cultural Change in Medieval Spain* (Manchester, 1995), 64-91.



Figure 12: Map, Soria with Rivers and Wooded areas that define the Sorian Plain.
Map, George Neal, Amy Hamman, and Mickey Abel.



Figure 13: Sorian Plain, from Gormaz Fortress looking South.
Photo, Hillary Turby and Mickey Abel.



Figure 14: Map, Soria with major Roman Roads.
Map, George Neal, Amy Hamman, and Mickey Abel.

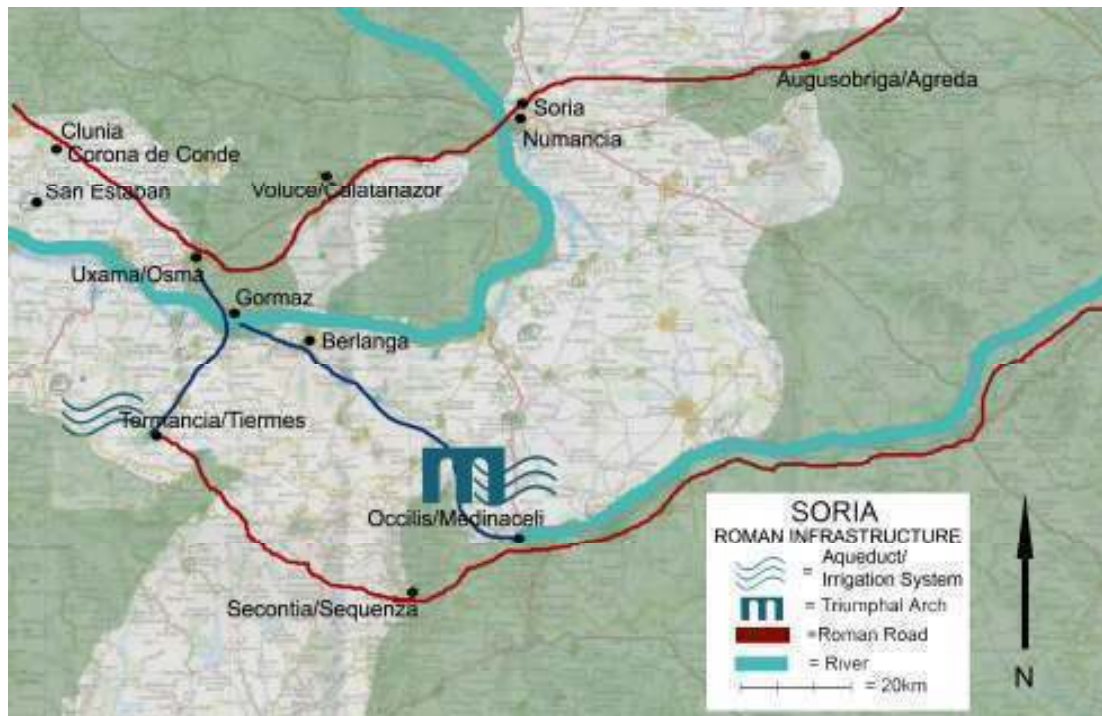


Figure 15: Map, Soria with Roman Infrastructure.
Map, George Neal, Amy Hamman, and Mickey Abel.



Figure 16: *Medinaceli, Roman Arch, 2nd Century, South of Almazan.*
Photo, Hillary Turby and Mickey Abel.

ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY OF SORIA

Preferring to reuse what the Romans had left behind, the Visigoths of Soria did not, as a rule, build fortresses or castles.²⁸ Muslims after the conquest in the 8th century did, however, build on many of the old Roman sites along the Roman trade routes, indicating that much of that earlier regional vitality and defensive value remained operative through the intervening centuries.²⁹ **(Figure 17)** From an archaeological point of view, there-building on these architectural sites would suggest a teleological progression of events—a seamless continuity of settlement. It is however, instructive to

²⁸ J. Jiménez Estaban, *El castillo medieval español y su evolución*, (Madrid, 1995), 43-51. J. Kaufmann and H. Kaufmann, *The Medieval Fortress* (Cambridge, 2001), 81, say that the Visigoths did build a series of small fortifications of adobe brick to prevent a Basque group from raiding. These were taken by the Bardulians in their fight against the Arabs.

²⁹ *Castillos de Soria: Aproximación a la arquitectura militar medieval*, Junta de Castilla y León, (Madrid, 1949), 27-30; and F. Cobos Guerra and J. Javier de Castro Fernández, *Castillos y Fortalezas* (León, 1998), 3-10.

remember that in the mapping of *people* as distinct from the life of architectural sites, we are dealing with inherent discontinuities and multiplicities of voice.³⁰ In Soria this is especially true when one takes into consideration the multiplicity of individual events that made up the whole of the Reconquest—particularly the back-and-forth nature of the individual site battles, which sparked the much-debated pattern of abandonment and repopulation of the region.³¹



Figure 17: Map, Soria, Roman sites inhabited by Muslim Fortresses.
Map, George Neal, Amy Hamman, and Mickey Abel.

³⁰ Feld and Basso, 5.

³¹ C. Sánchez-Albornoz, *Despoblación y Repoblación del Valle del Duero* (Buenos Aires, 1966). One of the “Libros de Repartimiento” has been translated from the Castilian by T. Glick in “Resettlement and Redistribution of Land” *Medieval Iberia: Readings from Christian, Muslim, and Jewish Sources*, O. R. Constable, (ed.), (Philadelphia, 1997), 228-231.

In Soria, we know that the majority of the Visigoths who settled in the region did so on the open plain as peasant farmers--many of them staying on after the Muslim conquest.³² And while not recorded in significant buildings, their presence can be seen in the peppering of the area with hundreds of sculpted stones, known as “estelas.”³³ **(Figure 18)** Named for their “star-like” decorative forms, these displaced funerary monuments incorporated a variety of vegetal and geometric motifs and are found in forty-nine different locations in the Sorian district, indicating wide-spread Visigothic settlement. **(Figure 19)** There is also documentary evidence that, after the Muslim conquest, as early as 718, Christians from the north had begun to resettle in the ruins at Uxama.³⁴ **(See Figure 17)** Because of the constant need for open pastureland, this gradual resettlement from the north continued on an ad hoc basis until 1085, when the Christian kings made re-settlement more deliberate and politically motivated.³⁵ Historians, generally basing their arguments on the chronicles left by these Christian kings, would paint a picture of an era of as much as a hundred years of complete abandonment and depopulation—the

³² C. de la Casa Martínez, “Aproximación al hábitat visigodo de Termes,” *II Simposium de Arqueología Soriana*, Vol. II, (1989), 1007-1019.

³³ C. de la Casa Martínez, *Estelas medievales de la provincia de Soria* (Soria, 1993), 134; and M. Doménech Esteban, “Dispersión geográfica y temática decorativa de las estelas medievales de la provincia de Soria” *Actas del I Simposium de Arqueología Soriana* (Soria, 1984), 525-531, who notes that these stones are found most often reused as wall ornamentation in later Romanesque churches, but also in private gardens and resituated in modern cemeteries.

³⁴ Uxama is now named Osma. See Lomax, 52.

³⁵ J. Gautier-Dalché, “Reconquête et Structures de l’Habitat en Castille” *Castrum 3: Guerre, Fortification et Habitat dans le Monde Méditerranée au Moyen Âge* (Madrid, 1985), 200-206; Lomax, 96; and personal conversation with E. Pascua, at the 2005 meeting of the Historians of Medieval Iberia at Exeter University, where an earlier version of this material was delivered. Dr. Pascua is preparing her own paper, “Round and About Water: Christians and Muslims in the Ebro River in the 14th Century,” for a Festschrift dedicated to Professor Richard Fletcher, edited by Peter Linehan and Simon Barton, (Leiden: Brill Academic Press, 2006). See also, J. Ángel García de Cortázar, “Sociedad rural y organización del espacio en la Castilla del año mil” *Campagnes Médiévales: L’Homme et son Espace* (Paris, 1995), 613-625; and Powers, 13-24. For a study of the people caught in this nebulous period, see T. Burman, *Religious Polemic and the Intellectual History of the Mozarabs, c. 1050-1200* (Leiden, 1994), 20-25.

Christians fleeing to the north or sold into African slavery—the Muslims retreating further south.³⁶ Others, like Thomas Glick, are more sensitive to the archaeological evidence and suggest that these accounts refer primarily to elite populations occupying the hilltop fortresses. Further, the occasional stories of burning and pillaging of crops, or the rustling of herds as booty, should be seen as an indication that, like the products themselves, the farmers and shepherds who produced them were considered valuable commodities by both sides.³⁷ Glick feels that these people were, for the most part, outside the purview of the military skirmishes, and were generally left alone so that they could continue to be productive.³⁸ Indeed, the design of Muslim fortresses, like that at Gormaz (**Figure 20**) shows that they were built initially as a simple walled precinct—an *alcazaba*—and used, not to stake out a military frontier as Christian castles came to be used, but rather as an outpost protection for herds, harvested crops, and the people who tended both.³⁹

³⁶ C. Sánchez-Albornoz, *Despoblación y repoblación del Valle del Duero* (Buenos Aires, 1966).

³⁷ Glick, (1979), 51-106; and Glick, (1995), 125-164.

³⁸ Powers, 22, 94, 210, suggests that some of the skirmishes may actually have been between the farmers, who were primarily Muslim, and the shepherds, who were primarily Christian. The control of water was more the issue than a difference in religion. In her forthcoming article, Esther Pasqua illustrates the political necessity and acceptance felt by Christian rulers for the Muslim expertise in regards to the operation of mill and irrigation systems. See note 26.

³⁹ For the function of an Islamic castle see, Glick, (1995), "Incastellamento," 105-113; L. Monreal y Tejada, *Medieval Castles of Spain* (Cologne, 1999), 11-21; H. Kennedy, "Fortifications in the West and East before the First Crusade" *Crusader Castles* (Cambridge, 1994), 1-11; and Kaufmann and Kaufmann, 79-83, 129-130. For the development of Christian castles see M. Bur, "The Social Influence of the Motte and Bailey Castle" *Scientific American*, Vol. 248/5 (1983), 132-143. In general see, J. Espinosa de los Monteros and L. Martín-Artajo Saracho, *Corpus de castillos medievales de Castilla*, (Bilbao, 1974); J. Bernad Remon, *Castillos de Soria*, (Leon, 1994); F. Sainz Robles, *Castillos en España: su historia, su arte, sus leyendas* (Madrid, 1962); A. Weissmuller, *Castles from the Heart of Spain* (New York, 1967); R. A. Brown, *Castles: A History and Guide* (New York, 1980); and M. W. Thompson, *The Rise of the Castle* (Cambridge, 1991).



Figure 18: Visigothic Estelas.
Photo, Carlos de la Casa Martinez.

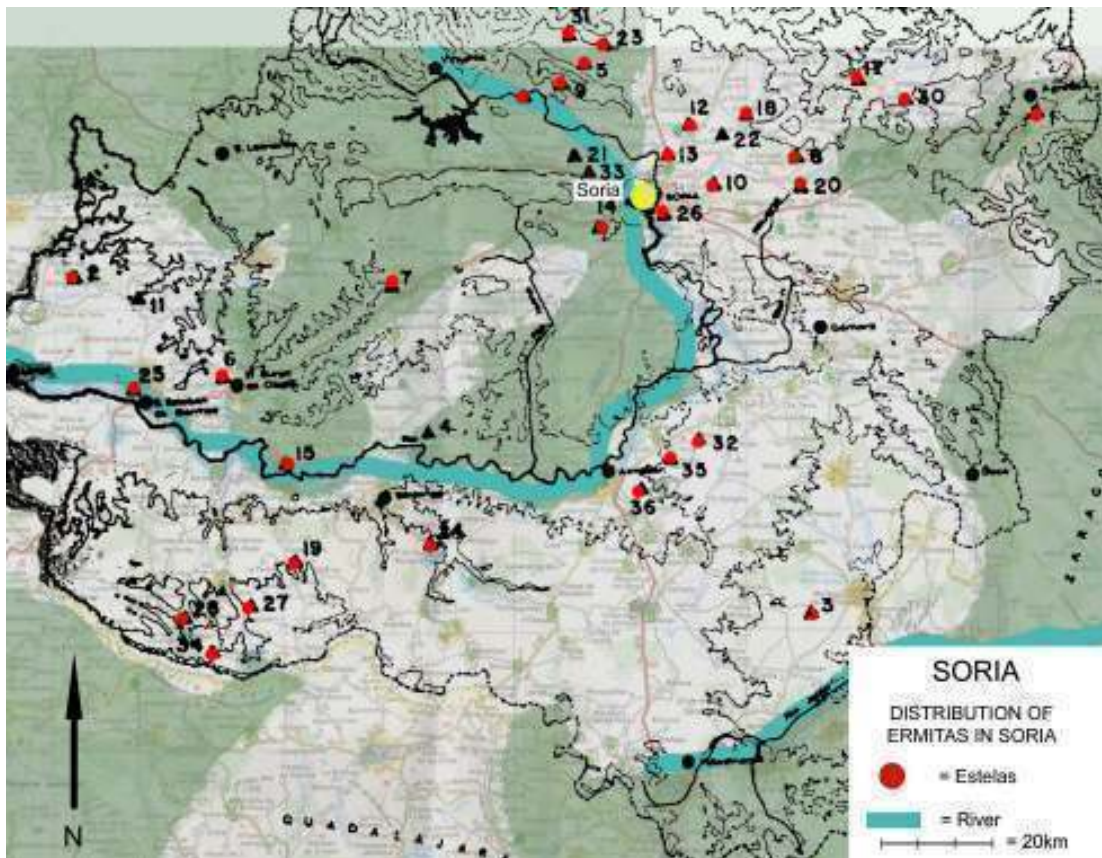


Figure 19: Map, Soria, Distribution of Estelas.
Map, George Neal, Amy Hamman, and Mickey Abel.



Figure 20: *Gormaz Fortress, West of Almazan, Northern Wall.*
Photo, Hillary Turby and Mickey Abel.

What we can, therefore, begin to sense in the accounting of these early settlers is a bilateral pattern of habitation⁴⁰—the life of the farmer, herder, or mill hand juxtaposed to that of the elite political events associated with the domineering fortresses. As seen in the view taken from the fortress of Calatañazor looking out to the farmland below, (**Figure 21**) this pattern of habitation is mirrored in the topographic landscape—the farmers and herders residing on the rolling plain, the ruling elite separated by elevation in their hilltop preserves. And thus, when the defensive sites of the Reconquest are added to the cognitive map, (**Figure 22**) one recognizes that the continued exploitation of the natural

⁴⁰ Feld and Basso, 6, theorize this as a “multi-sensual oscillation between a foreground of everyday lived emplacement” and “a background of social potential.”

topographic features—particularly the mountain vistas—that is witnessed in both the historical documents and in the continual re-use of the significant architectural sites, is a reflection of the abstract economic/political intentions of the actual power structure. However, in the expansion of the Roman infrastructure—such as the significant Muslim improvement of the Roman irrigation systems-- one should see not only a record of agricultural production, milling, and trade, but also a nuanced, multivalent picture of the populace who continued to inhabit the high sierra zone and keep the area's economy productive.



Figure 21: *Calatañazor Fortress, West of Soria, view from fortress to the West.*
Photo, Hillary Turby and Mickey Abel.



*Figure 22: Map, Soria, Fortress sites of the Twelfth Century.
Map, George Neal, Amy Hamman, and Mickey Abel.*

CHURCH BUILDING

Importantly, for the purposes of this mapping project, one of the requirements of these early shepherd/ farmer settlers—whether they be Visigoth descendants or transplanted northern Christians--was a priest to say Mass and perform the sacraments.⁴¹ Evidence indicates that settlements were routinely abandoned if a priest could not be provided or maintained. Structurally, what seems to have been required to accommodate these priests was a simple architectural form, like that at San Sebastian at Montuenga de Soria, (**Figure 23**) large enough only to house a baptismal font and mark a plot for a

⁴¹ Lomax, 97, refers to Alfonso VII's charters of the twelfth century in describing the measures taken to establish settlements. He says kings, such as Alfonso, provided priests in order to maintain the morale and to convince the settlers of the "transcendental nature of their work." See also, J. M. Lacarra, "Les villes-frontières dans l'Espagne des XIe et XIIe Siècles" *Le Moyen Âge* 69 (1963), 205-222; and M. Aubrun, *La Paroisse en France: des origines au XVe siècle* (Paris, 1986), 48-51, 56-63, 81-89, and 198.

necropolis.⁴² Remains of graves can be seen at several sites, to include Rominillos de Medinaceli, (**Figure 24**) San Baudelio de Berlanga, (**Figure 25**) and San Miguel de Gormaz.⁴³ (**Figure 26**) Interestingly, these small chapels, commonly known today as *ermitas*,⁴⁴ which were built to house the outpost priests and their fonts, give us an indication of the beginnings of the distinct portal orientation and siting of the later Romanesque churches. Like that at Torre de Pozuel, (**Figure 27**) they are situated high on the sides of hills, their portals are consistently oriented out towards the open plain.

⁴² For a discussion of the necropolis of Soria, see *Celtiberia* XXXII/64 (1982), 348-352; Caballero Zoreda, 433-458; and B. Taracena Aguirre, *Carta arqueológica de España: Soria*, (Madrid, 1941), 17-21. In general, see E. Zadora-Rio, "The Role of the Cemetery in the Formation of Medieval Settlement Patterns in Western France" *Medieval Archaeology*, C. Redman (ed.), (Binghamton, 1989), 171-186.

⁴³ At Rominillos de Medinaceli, (**Figure 24**) the church is built directly on the stone bedrock at the top of a flight of stairs. The graves are found to the right of the church's portal in an enclosed cemetery precinct and are carved into the same stone as that which forms the church's foundation. Similarly, those at San Baudelio de Berlanga (**Figure 25**) are carved into the bedrock, but here the precinct extends to the side of the church. At San Miguel de Gormaz (**Figure 26**) the exposed graves are today inside the enclosed porch. Bango Torviso, "El espacio para enterramientos," 94-98, discusses the space of the lateral porch or lateral entrance in pre-Romanesque Iberian churches as having special significance for burials.

⁴⁴ Historically, an *ermita* is defined as the dwelling of a hermit—a hermitage. It is a term generally used to distinguish small isolated churches from parish churches that had sacramental rights. Evidence presented here suggests that at least some of the churches encompassed in this study processed these rights, and thus the colloquial usage of the term "ermita" is not technically correct. It is, however, how these churches are indicated on maps, road signs, and guide books. I use it here to distinguish these essentially-undocumented chapels from the more codified designators of the twelfth-century churches, where we are on relatively solid ground in assigning them to a parochial system.



Figure 23: *Ermita San Sebastian at Montuenga de Soria, East of Medinaceli, South Lateral Portal. Photo, Hillary Turby and Mickey Abel.*



Figure 24: *Rominillos de Medinaceli, Necropolis Precinct to the East of the South Lateral Portal. Photo, Hillary Turby and Mickey Abel.*



Figure 25: *San Baudelio de Berlanga, Necropolis Precinct to the West of the South Lateral Portal. Photo, Hillary Turby and Mickey Abel.*



Figure 26: *San Miguel de Gormaz, Necropolis Precinct inside the North Porch.*
Photo, Hillary Turby and Mickey Abel.



Figure 27: *Ermita Torre de Pozuel, Western and Northern Walls.*
Photo, Hillary Turby and Mickey Abel.

Dating the ermitas is, however, problematic. Some have been attributed to the Visigoths based on building materials, inscriptions, and the carving of the baptismal fonts,⁴⁵ while others are ascribed to the northern Christians based on the dates of various Christian conquests and the style of the buildings. Some may even have had a temporary life as a mosque, like that at San Julian Medinaceli, which is located just inside the “Arab

⁴⁵ For the Visigothic evidence, see P. Banks and J. Zozaya, “Excavations in the Caliphal Fortress of Gormaz (Soria), 1979-1981: A Summary” *Papers in Iberian Archaeology*, T. Blagg, R. Jones, and S. Keay, (eds.), BAR International Series 193(ii), (1984), 679; Caballero Zoreda, 443-451; and J. Zozaya, “Evolución de un Yacimiento: El Castillo de Gormaz (Soria)” *Castrum 3: Guerre, Fortification et Habitat dans le Monde Mediterranean au Moyen âge*, (1988), 177. For baptismal fonts, see M. A. Alonso Sanchez, “Pilas Bautismales Sorianas con Omega-Alfa” *II Symposium de arqueología soriana*, Vol. II, (1989), 1131-1143.

Gate” in the walled village of Medinaceli.⁴⁶ **(Figure 28)** Occasionally we find this indicated by way of interior decoration, such as horseshoe arches or inscriptions, as seen with the inscription of Hakam II **(Figure 29)** and the horseshoe arch **(Figure 30)** found at San Miguel de Gormaz.⁴⁷ The most famous in this category is, of course, San Baudelio **(Figure 31)** with its mosque-like configuration, horseshoe arched door, **(Figure 32)** and secular, Islam-inspired murals.⁴⁸ To further confound this dating issue, many of the extant ermita have been significantly remodeled through Renaissance and early modern use.⁴⁹ Seen from the outside, the added portal ornamentation and rebuilt walls of the ermita at Romanillos de Medinaceli **(Figure 33)** obscures all but the stones of the medieval foundation. And like many of the ermitas the interior has been plastered and whitewashed. Similarly, at the ermita at Torre de Pozuel, **(See Figure 27)** one can see signs of rebuilding in the fabric of the upper portion of the walls, where the earlier rubble-stone construction of the lower wall changes to a cut and mortared stone just under the eaves, probably to accommodate a new, more substantial roof.

⁴⁶This sort of “temporary life” has also been recorded and studied in the Portuguese context. See *Terras de Moura Encantada: Art Islamica en Portugal* (Porto, 1999). I would like to thank Dr. Clark Maines for calling this to my attention. For a discussion of a layering of meaning in ecclesiastical space that comes through re-use and appropriation, see J. Dodds, “Spaces,” *The Literature of Al-Andalus*, M. Menocal, R. Scheindlin, and M. Sells, (eds.), (Cambridge, 2000), 83-95.

⁴⁷M. Ocaña, “Lápida árabe de la Ermita de San Miguel de Gormaz” *Al-Andalus* 8 (1943), 450-452. For a discussion of horseshoe arches in the Spanish context, see Dodds, 17-20 and *passim*.

⁴⁸J. Andrio Gonzalo and E. Loyola Perea, “Necropolis Medieval de San Baudelio de Casillas de Berlanga,” *II Symposium de arqueología soriana*, Vol. II, (1989), 1069-1087; and A. Escolano Benito, *San Baudelio de Berlanga: Guía y Complementarios*, (Salamanca, 2003). San Baudelio has long been embroiled in a “dating” controversy of its own based on the two styles of mural paintings found on the interior. For this argument see, J. Garnelo, “Descripción de las pinturas murales que decoran la ermita de San Baudelio en Casillas de Berlanga (Soria)” *Boletín de la Sociedad Española de Excursiones*, 32 (1924): 96-109; C. Hawes, “Two Paintings from the Hermitage Church of San Baudelio de Berlanga, Castile, Spain” *Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts*, 26, no 153, (1928), 6-11; and A. Kulp, *San Baudelio de Berlanga: New Considerations* (University of Washington, 1984). I would like to thank Rachael Garnett for bringing these citations to my attention.

⁴⁹For a discussion of remodeling in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, see I. Gonzalo Bango Torviso, “El neovisigotismo artístico de los siglos IX y X: La restauración de ciudades y templos” *Revista de ideas estéticas*, 148 (1979), 319-338.



Figure 28: *Ermita San Julian Medinaceli-ville, South Lateral Portal.*
Photo, Hillary Turby and Mickey Abel.



Figure 29: *Inscription of Hakam II, San Miguel de Gormaz.*
Photo, Hillary Turby and Mickey Abel.



Figure 30: *Ermita San Miguel de Gormaz, Interior Portal leading from the Porch into the Nave. Photo, Hillary Turby and Mickey Abel.*



Figure 31: *Ermita San Baudelio de Berlanga, West of Almazan, South Lateral Portal.*
Photo, Hillary Turby and Mickey Abel.



Figure 32: *Portal Detail, Ermita San Baudelio de Berlanga.*
Photo, Hillary Turby and Mickey Abel.



Figure 33: *Ermita Romanillos de Medinaceli, South of Almazan, Western Wall.*
Photo, Hillary Turby and Mickey Abel.

The most vexing question related to the dating problem, however, results from the ermita's orientation in relation to the domineering fortress that often sits directly above them. Like the relationship between fortress and ermita at Torre de Pozuel, (**Figure 34**) the ermita San Miguel de Gormaz (**Figures 35 & 36**) is positioned approximately 16 meters below the elevation of the perimeter wall of the hilltop fortress. This diminutive ermita is comprised of a rectangular nave with an enclosed porch that runs the length of the southern wall. The eastern end of the building is identified as an apsidal space on the exterior by way of its lowered roof line, and on the interior by way of a single raised step. This apsidal space is large enough to accommodate only a podium-like altar or baptismal

font. The western wall of the building, which now serves as the bell tower or *espadaña*, is likely a Renaissance or Baroque addition, but reflects the position of many medieval bell towers of this region, with its elevated roof and arched openings for the hanging of bells. (See **Figure 42**) The singular portal is located midway on the northern wall. This door leads into the porch and gives way to a second portal that opens onto the space of the nave. Interestingly, to the left of this interior door there is a horseshoe-arch opening—now walled off—that could have been an earlier door or perhaps a window. (**Figure 30**) It replicates both the horseshoe configuration and the northern orientation of the main gate of the fortress directly above it, (**Figure 37**) and thus visually links the two structures, suggesting the possibility of either an interactive accessibility or at least a relationship between the two based on power and control.



Figure 34: *Ermita and Fortress, Torre de Pozuel, Southeast of Almazan, Eastern Wall.*
Photo, Hillary Turby and Mickey Abel.



Figure 35: *Ermita and Fortress, San Miguel de Gormaz, Southern Wall.*
Photo, Hillary Turby and Mickey Abel.



Figure 36: *Ermita San Miguel de Gormaz, Northern Wall, before restoration (Image in the public domain).*



Figure 37: *Gormaz Fortress, Southern Wall above the Ermita, double arch of main entrance gate. Photo, Hillary Turby and Mickey Abel.*

The ideological problem with this visual and topographical correlation comes about when we try to justify the interaction with the historians' rendering of divisive events of the Reconquest. If we are to put stock in the documentary evidence, it seems inconceivable that even the smallest of Christian churches would/could have been built in the vulnerable position directly in front of a defensive fortress—especially one occupied by Muslim forces, as was the case with Gormaz. Unfortunately, archaeologists, thus far, have not addressed the correlation of the church and the fortress,⁵⁰ and art historians seem to have passed over the relatively unarticulated ermita in favor of later, more

⁵⁰ M. Retuerce Velasco, "La arqueología medieval en Soria, Estado de la cuestión" *II Symposium de arqueología soriana*, Vol. II, (1989), 1061-1069.

architecturally-rich Romanesque churches of the twelfth century. In terms of our understanding of the orientational siting of the later twelfth-century churches, however, it is precisely this locational correlation between the ermita and to what we assume to be a defensive castle--no matter whether the inhabitants were Christian or Muslim--that makes these remote little churches so interesting.

If we consider the ermitas to be Visigothic and the fortresses to be built subsequent to them, one has to wonder, from a topographical point of view, why building the ermitas mid-way up the side of the hill was the preferable location. Why not the top of the hill? Archaeological evidence suggests that many of the fortresses may have been built on some sort of Roman site. So even if the ermita were built in a period of time when there was physically nothing of significance left on the top of the hill, there may well have been some connotation of the hilltop site as “occupied.” Further, the label “ermita” implies a sense of isolation or remoteness associated with a hermitage that is lost in their present correlation to the domineering fortress and the expansion of the lower village. In the absence of these more prominent visual presences—that is above the floodplain and away from the village settlement further down the valley--the positioning of the small chapel may have connoted the religious significance of isolation and protection associated with a hermit’s existence. Seen from this frame of reference, the subsequent building of the fortress in relation to the church can imply two things according to the political affiliation of the power elite occupying the fortress. If these fortress occupants were Islamic, then one might conclude a control factor was in play, suggesting a sense of toleration in the coexistence of the two religions in close physical proximity. If, on the other hand, the fortress was occupied by Christian forces, then the

element of protection could be seen as co-dependent. The spiritual protection emanating from the religious power of the church reflected and corroborated that military protection of the Christian forces sheltering the vulnerable ermita.

The political implications of the close physical correlation between ermita and fortress shift significantly if we consider the ermita to be built by Christian settlers after the conquest of the Muslims. In this case the building of the ermita under the protective wings of a Christian-occupied fortress seems quite plausible as it could be seen to service the religious needs of both the military forces above it and the village people below it. Building a Christian chapel directly under the watchful eyes of a Muslim fortress, like the relationship of the ermita at Gormaz (**Figure 38**) and the Muslim fortress above it is, however, more problematic. Can we assume an air of spiritual toleration on the part of the Islamic occupants as they sought to provide spiritual refuge for the Christian inhabitants of the plain?⁵¹ Should we then assume it was a matter of direct control—Muslim forces watching their Christian subjects' religious behavior under close scrutiny?

⁵¹ The prominent presence of bells in the western bell-tower wall (*espadaña*) would argue against this arrangement as this type of outward, metaphysical sign of Christianity was generally banned. Although several of the ermita have western bell-tower walls, a difference in building material suggests that some were Renaissance or Baroque additions and should not play into this analysis. For the general significance of Christian bells in an Islamic context, see Lomax, 104.



Figure 38: *Gormaz Fortress, View from main entrance gate South to Ermita San Miguel.
Photo, Hillary Turby and Mickey Abel.*

This last line of speculation is moot if we simply assume that the ermita were built only after the Christian conquest of Muslim territory. It is under these conditions that the portal orientation and topographical siting are the most relevant. Seen from the open plain, the ermitas, like that seen to the left of the hilltop fortress in the image of

Torre de Pozuel (**Figure 39**) in comparison to the fortresses above them, appear to be small, isolated buildings. They are positioned in accordance with the typical E/W orientation of a Christian church—the apsidal end is generally rectangular and elevated slightly, the western end sometimes having openings cut into the wall so as to hang bells.

A survey of the extant ermita shows that uniformly, the portal is positioned on either the north or the south wall and not on axis with the apse.⁵² What becomes evident by way of on-site observation, and as the result of this mapping project, is that long-distance visibility is similarly key to the siting of both the fortress/castle and the ermita. While the mountains to the rear of most of the fortresses—both north and south of the sierra--have peaks up to 300 meters above the rolling hills of the high plain, the elevation of most of the fortresses is at least 130 meters above the river. As seen on a clear day from the height of the fortress at Montuenga de Soria down to the ermita below and across the plain, (**Figure 40**) there is a visibility of up to 50 kilometers out across the sierra divide, which is itself not much wider than this in some areas.⁵³ Situated so as to be elevated above the plain, but below the fortress walls, the ermitas share in some of this visibility. In their elevated stance in relation to the domineering fortress, they are, therefore, simultaneously visible from the fortress opening and from across the open landscape.⁵⁴ Most interestingly, their portals are oriented so as to face out towards the wide sierra and away from the fortress gate, in front of which they stand. Consistently, the ermitas' portals face north if the fortress is on the south side of the sierra, and conversely, they

⁵² See Appendix listing of these ermita.

⁵³ P. Banks and J. Zozaya, 674-690.

⁵⁴ This sort of visibility is associated with the “miradores” of Islamic palaces. See D. Fairchild Ruggles, “The Alcazar of Seville and Mudejar Architecture” *Gesta*, XLIII/2 (2004), 87-98.

face south if they are on the north side of the divide. As illustrated by their position on the map, **(Figure 41)** this orientation suggests that the interaction with the natural topography was as significant as their relation to the domineering fortress. As such, the orientational positioning of the chapels serves to re-state the separating factor of the wide sierra. In turning their portals to face the open plain, these small chapels conveyed, on a diminutive scale, the subtle message of refuge, and security meant to be understood in the function of the fortified gates of the fortress above them.⁵⁵ For the purposes of this mapping project, the combination of the formal elements of the portal, apse, and bell-tower wall signaled a Christian presence that worked to mediate the positivism of the political divide that we sense in the reading of the historical documents.⁵⁶ As such the ermita lend credence to the archaeological notion that the high sierra was never completely abandoned, but continued to be used as pasture and farmland, and inhabited by people ideologically conditioned to this type of visual message.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ For a description of Islamic fortified gates see, J. Zozaya, "Islamic Fortifications in Spain: Some Aspects," *Papers in Iberian Archaeology*, T. Blagg, R. Jones, and S. Keay, (eds.), BAR International Series 193(ii), (1984), 639-645.

⁵⁶ J. Morland, *Archaeology and Text* (London, 2001), argues generally for an archaeological remedy to the disconnect that lies between the written "word" studied by historians and the "object" studied by the archaeologist.

⁵⁷ In this case the ermitas speak for the communities they were used by. For this line of thought, see Moreland, 35-44. Some military historians also work from the idea that the plains were never fully abandoned and that village militias grew out of these plains people's need to defend themselves. See Powers, 1-39.



Figure 39: *Monteagudo Fortress and Ermita below to the left.*
Photo, Hillary Turby and Mickey Abel.



Figure 40: *Ermita Montuenga de Soria, Southern Wall.*
Photo, Hillary Turby and Mickey Abel.

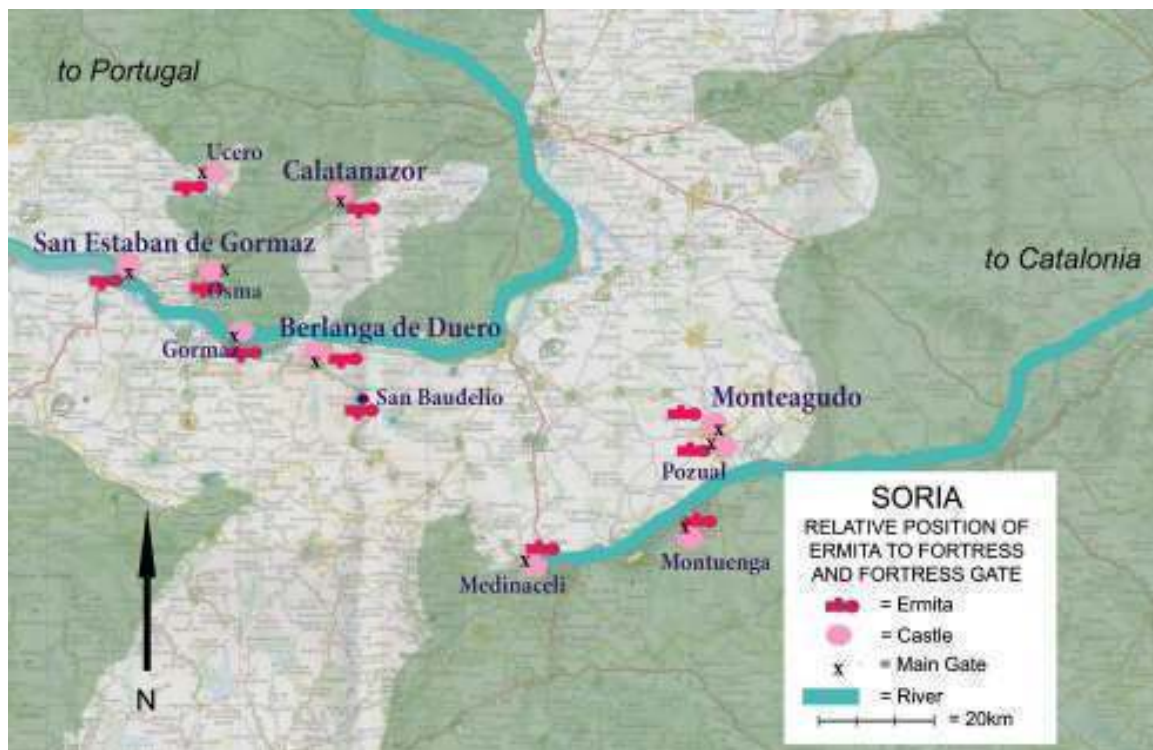


Figure 41: Map, Soria showing orientation and relative position of Fortress and Ermita. Map, George Neal, Amy Hamman, and Mickey Abel.

Thus, when we finally add the Christian sites of the twelfth century to our cognitive map, we see that between 1085-1150 the plain had become littered with Romanesque churches. (See **Figure 9**) Like their ermita predecessors most of these new foundations were prominently placed on hilltops or outcroppings—albeit smaller and less domineering than those of the ermita—nonetheless making them visible from across the rolling plain and from one village to another.⁵⁸ Emulating the orientational stance of the ermitas, the north or south portals of the twelfth-century churches, like that at Valdegeña (**Figure 42**) or Calatañazor, (**Figure 43**) complete with sculptural ornamentation and enframing alfiz, faced out towards the open space. To all who would pass by, they

⁵⁸ Theoretically, this development is similar to one traced and analyzed in early medieval Italy. See R. Francovich and R. Hodges, “Conclusions: Four Stages of Transformation,” in *Villa to Village: The Transformation of the Roman Countryside in Italy, c. 400-1000* (London, 2003), 106-114.

proclaimed, more defiantly than their ermita predecessors, their Christian affiliation. With the prolific replication of these churches, the Sorian region could no longer have been seen or perceived as an area of mixed messages. Branded by the repetitious broadcast of similarly configured and locationally oriented churches, the Duero plain would have been seen as occupied and dominated by a Christian presence.



Figure 42: *Valdegeña (c. 1100), East of Soria, Southern Wall.*
Photo, Hillary Turby and Mickey Abel.



Figure 43: *Calatañazor, West of Soria, North Wall with North Lateral Portal.*
Photo, Hillary Turby and Mickey Abel.

Appendix A: Ermitas Considered in this Study (See Map, Figure 41)

San Miguel de Gormaz

San Baudelio de Berlanga

Medinaceli

Montuenga de Soria

Monteagudo

Ucero

Calatañazor

Torre de Pozuel

Berlanga de Duero

Osma

San Esteban de Gormaz

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